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Proportion of General Service staff to Professional staff in the regional commissions

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraphs 72 and 73 of General Assembly resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, concerning the proportion of General Service posts compared to Professional posts in the regional commissions. The review confirms that a higher overall ratio of General Service to Professional posts exists in four of the regional commissions than in other economic and social departments. This is a result of the broader coverage of services under the programme support component in the regional commissions, which include not only the traditional support functions, such as finance, budgeting, management and personnel administration, but also the management of technical cooperation programmes, conference and library services, security and safety and other services. While investment in information technology will eventually lead to improvements in the efficiency of support services, most regional commissions continue to rely heavily on their own staff for support services owing to a limited availability of outsourcing opportunities in their localities.

* The present report was submitted late owing to competing workload demands.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraphs 72 and 73 of General Assembly resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, in which the Assembly:

(a) Noted with concern the high proportion of General Service posts compared to Professional posts in the regional commissions, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on efforts undertaken, as appropriate;

(b) Noted paragraph VI.14 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/56/7), and requested the Secretary-General, as a general principle, to keep under review the ratio between General Service staff and Professional staff, taking into account the impact on the Organization of the investments in new technologies and bearing in mind the differentiated mandates and programmes of work of the various duty stations.

2. In paragraph V.10 of its report (A/56/7), the Advisory Committee noted the high ratio in the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) of staff in the General Service and other categories to staff in the Professional category and above. In the opinion of the Committee, the steady introduction of new work methods using modern technology might well reduce this ratio. The Committee requested that a review be undertaken and that, as appropriate, measures be introduced to reduce the ratio of General Service to Professional staff in ECA. The Committee also requested the Secretary-General to report, in the context of the next budget submission, on the steps taken.

3. It is also recalled, in this connection, that in its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/54/7, para. V.15), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions noted that the components of programme support in the regional commissions include conference and library services, and management of technical cooperation in addition to traditional support functions, such as budgeting, management and personnel administration. The Committee was of the view, therefore, that as more modern technology and innovations were applied to automate support activities, the number of posts associated with those services should stabilize, allowing more resources to be released to substantive activities.

II. Analysis of the current situation

4. In order to review the situation, information was gathered from each of the regional commissions, as well as from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, on the number of staff assigned to each function within the General Service and related categories for the bienniums 1998-1999, 2000-2001 and 2002-2003. Each office or department also estimated resources applied towards technology and innovation to automate support activities during these periods, and which therefore could possibly impact the number of General Service staff assigned to support functions.

5. Detailed review confirms the existence of an overall higher ratio of General Service staff to Professional staff within the regional commissions than in UNCTAD and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. More specifically, four of the

commissions reflect a higher proportion of General Service staff to Professional staff compared to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1
Ratio of General Service posts to Professional posts, 2002-2003

ECA	1.7
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)	1.9
Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)	0.7
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)	1.6
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)	1.5
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	0.8
UNCTAD	0.8

These staff provide support to each of the commissions in areas such as conference and library services, general operating support, security and safety and management of technical cooperation, in addition to traditional support functions, such as budgeting, management and personnel administration. The number of staff providing support in these areas in the commissions substantially exceed the number of General Service staff in other departments and offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, where support is centrally provided for a number of offices at each location. However, while significantly higher ratios exist in the four regional commissions for these non-secretarial functions, the ratio of General Service staff to Professional staff across secretarial functions are much more comparable across the offices reviewed, as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2
Ratio of secretarial General Service posts to Professional posts, 2002-2003

ECA	0.5
ESCAP	0.8
ECE	0.6
ECLAC	0.6
ESCWA	0.7
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	0.5
UNCTAD	0.3

Thus, the higher proportion of General Service staff in the regional commissions is directly related to the large number of non-secretarial staff required in the regional commissions, which have to rely on their own support services.

6. Annexes I to III to the present report contain detailed information on secretarial and non-secretarial General Service staff and the ratio of General Service staff to Professional staff, and the share of equipment and telecommunication resources (financed from the regular budget and extrabudgetary resources) per one General Service post in the five regional commissions and in the Department of

Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD for the bienniums 1998-1999, 2000-2001 and 2002-2003.

7. From a comparative analysis of the information compiled from those regional commissions that provide their own support services (ECA, ESCAP, ECLAC and ESCWA), and similar information compiled for ECE, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD, the following conclusions may be made:

(a) While the ratio of a General Service secretarial component to Professional staff is similar across the offices reviewed, the non-secretarial component in the four regional commissions that rely on their own support services (ECA, ESCAP, ECLAC and ESCWA), is much larger than in ECE, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD, which receive support from common support services from the Department of Management and from the United Nations Office at Geneva;

(b) The ratio of non-secretarial General Service staff relative to Professional staff is not excessive in any particular regional commission. ECA, ESCAP, ECLAC and ESCWA have ratios that range from 0.9 to 1.2, while similar ratios for ECE, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD range from 0.1 to 0.5;

(c) The ratio of non-secretarial staff to Professional staff in all these offices, and consequently the need for establishing and maintaining support service capacities also depends on the local situation and the current stage of development of infrastructure and commercial services in the country of the office location. For instance, the degree to which support services may be contracted and outsourced differs between regional commissions.

III. Situation in regional commissions with higher ratio of General Service to Professional posts (Economic Commission for Africa, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia)

Economic Commission for Africa

8. Addis Ababa is a unique duty station that requires different approaches to staffing. The existing proportion of General Service (local level) posts to Professional posts reflects the challenges involved in operating in the duty station. The specific areas that are unique are as follows:

(a) Owing to the security situation in the country, there is a need for a higher number of security staff at the local level than at the Professional level;

(b) Owing to an underdeveloped private sector, cleaning services cannot be outsourced, hence a large number of cleaners have been on the staffing table for several years;

(c) Most of the local staff, employed under the General Service category, is involved in the provision of services that could not be provided otherwise, e.g., drivers, building maintenance technicians, conference services.

9. Investments in information technology may have an impact on staff ratios in some cases. The major area, which could be affected in due time by information technology development is that of secretarial support.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

10. ESCAP has 1.7 General Service staff posts for each Professional staff post funded by regular budget resources. In the programme of work area, ESCAP requires two major categories of posts: (a) administrative and secretarial assistance; and (b) research and other specially qualified staff in particular subprogrammes such as statistical assistance.

11. The ratio of General Service posts to professional posts in the programme of work area has been relatively constant over the past biennium. An increased workload in the substantive area, owing to the decentralization of administrative and budgetary control to the programme managers, has been compensated by productivity gains, hence stabilizing the overall General Service to Professional posts ratio in the programme of work area.

12. In the programme support area, the higher ratio of General Service to Professional staff posts is in particular required for non-secretarial assistance. In an effort to gradually reduce the support services, ESCAP redeployed seven General Service staff posts from the programme support area to the programme of work area in the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 to strengthen information technology and research services in the substantive areas. However, with the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/286 on 27 June 2002 on strengthening the security and safety of United Nations premises, the ratio has been affected owing to the increased requirements for 30 additional security officer posts in 2003.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

13. The number of staff in non-secretarial functions reflects a modest but steady decline. While the total numbers do not show any change in work assignments of General Service staff, it should be pointed out that a number of posts in support areas have been redefined and redeployed to substantive areas to support the programme of work. It should be noted that the number of General Service posts decreased in 2002-2003 in comparison with 1998-1999. The abolition of some support functions has been made possible where outsourcing of services has proved efficient and cost effective.

14. As regards modern technology and innovation, resources available under the regular budget have experienced a decrease significantly affecting the purchase of electronic-data-processing equipment, installation and maintenance. While ECLAC has resorted to the use of extrabudgetary resources, the modest resource level under the latter source of funds has been insufficient even to partially offset the shortfall. In the current circumstances almost 60 per cent of the electronic-data-processing-related inventory is already over four years old and in need of replacement. It is estimated that if the resource base were brought back to 2000-2001 amounts during the current or next biennium, it would still be insufficient to keep pace with a three-year replacement policy. A significant proportion of the resources have been used to address priority

needs such as management information systems (i.e., the Integrated Management Information System). A similar effect has occurred in the resources for purchase of information and telecommunications equipment. Budget constraints, which have materially affected the resource base for the purchase of electronic-data-processing equipment, have not made it possible to intensify the introduction of technological innovations, which might have released a larger number of support posts.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

15. At the beginning of 2002, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA embarked on a restructuring exercise to reduce the number of posts in the programme support component in order to release resources to the substantive areas, thereby strengthening those areas. The exercise resulted in the increase of 1 P-3 post and the reduction of 15 local level posts in the programme support area. The additional P-3 post was assigned to Conference Services as a step towards strengthening the section in response to paragraph 20, section III, of General Assembly resolution 57/283 of 15 April 2003 to ensure fully the issuance of all documents and publications of ESCWA in Arabic. The resulting ratio of General Service posts to Professional posts in ESCWA support areas is much improved but any further reduction in the number of General Service staff would have a negative impact on the delivery of services to programme areas.

IV. Conclusion

16. **The higher ratio of General Service to Professional staff within the regional commissions, except for ECE, is a result of the broader coverage of services under the programme support component in the regional commissions, which includes the traditional support functions, as well as the management of the technical cooperation programme, conference and library services, security and safety and other services. While the ratio of General Service to Professional staff has generally remained much the same for three bienniums, there is a trend to replacement of low-qualified trade and craft General Service staff by computer and information technology skilled personnel. However, this is a long process, in which full results cannot be achieved in a short period of time. While investment in information technology will eventually lead to improvements in the efficiency of support services, most regional commissions continue to rely on their own support services owing to a number of conditions prevailing in the locality. Moreover, it is difficult to define an optimal post structure for any regional commission, because each of them must be viewed as a separate entity to ensure that the requisite resources are available for implementation of mandated activities.**

V. Recommendation

17. **The General Assembly may wish to take note of the present report.**

Annex I

Analysis of the number of General Service staff relative to Professional staff and technology and innovation resources (total regular budget and extrabudgetary)

	ECA			ESCAP			ECE			ECLAC			ESCWA			Department of Economic and Social Affairs			UNCTAD		
Occupational group	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03
Professional and above	**239**	**247**	**242**	**173**	**175**	**177**	**121**	**118**	**122**	**219**	**202**	**204**	**104**	**104**	**107**	**311**	**310**	**322**	**240**	**240**	**235**
General Service categories																					
Secretarial support	132	139	120	129	127	135	75	74	72	121	125	119	68	66	76	181	184	172	110	87	72
Non-secretarial																					
Conference services	22	17	17	57	58	55	1	1	1	72	64	63	27	26	23	25	23	22	16	16	18
Personnel services	19	19	19	19	20	19	1	1	1	12	15	15	8	10	8	11	12	13	8	8	8
Financial services	23	23	23	21	21	21	2	2	2	21	23	23	8	8	8	12	14	15	8	8	8
General services	18	15	18	71	68	63	2	3	3	66	64	63	32	32	28	1	1	1	7	8	8
Electronic support services	5	5	6	16	14	16	2	2	2	21	22	24	7	7	8	21	19	19	11	11	11
Security and safety services	40	44	44	25	27	27	0	0	0	16	16	16	12	13	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	165	176	161	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	52	61
Total non-secretarial	**292**	**299**	**288**	**209**	**208**	**201**	**8**	**9**	**9**	**208**	**204**	**204**	**94**	**96**	**88**	**70**	**69**	**70**	**75**	**103**	**114**
Total General Service categories	**424**	**438**	**408**	**338**	**335**	**336**	**83**	**83**	**81**	**329**	**329**	**323**	**162**	**162**	**164**	**251**	**253**	**242**	**185**	**190**	**186**
Ratio of General Service to Professionals and above	1.8	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.9	1.9	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Ratio of secretarial General Service to Professionals and above	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3
Ratio of non-secretarial General Service to Professionals	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5
Technology and innovation resources (thousands of United States dollars)																					
(a) EDP equipment	2 236.8	4 854.0	1 444.2	1 380.3	892.3	756.0	119.0	119.0	115.0	2 609.1	2 077.9	1 882.2	831.5	754.6	547.7	1 580.6	2 035.0	1 633.1	2 926.5	2 517.3	2 259.0
(b) Information and communications equipment	111.3	251.4	189.5	30.6	80.2	63.0	15.0	6.0	1.0	241.7	262.3	213.6	52.6	161.0	158.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	820.4	667.9	692.7
Total equipment	**2 348.1**	**5 105.4**	**1 633.7**	**1 410.9**	**972.5**	**819.0**	**134.0**	**125.0**	**116.0**	**2 850.8**	**2 340.2**	**2 095.8**	**884.1**	**915.6**	**705.7**	**1 580.6**	**2 035.0**	**1 633.1**	**3 746.9**	**3 185.2**	**2 951.7**
Equipment resources per 1 post (thousands of United States dollars)	3.5	7.5	2.5	2.8	1.9	1.6	0.7	0.6	0.6	5.2	4.4	4.0	3.3	3.4	2.6	2.8	3.6	2.9	8.8	7.4	7.0

Annex II

Analysis of the number of General Service staff relative to Professional staff and technology and innovation resources (regular budget)

	ECA			ESCAP			ECE			ECLAC			ESCWA			Department of Economic and Social Affairs			UNCTAD		
Occupational group	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03
Professional and above	213	218	219	171	173	175	114	115	119	181	182	186	104	104	107	287	287	303	227	231	226
General Service categories																					
Secretarial support	106	105	105	99	98	106	74	73	71	113	116	113	68	66	76	171	175	171	104	83	71
Non-secretarial																					
Conference services	22	17	17	56	57	54	1	1	1	70	63	61	27	26	23	25	23	22	16	16	16
Personnel services	14	14	14	15	16	15	1	1	1	12	14	14	8	10	8	4	4	5	5	5	5
Financial services	17	17	17	17	17	17	2	2	2	20	22	23	8	8	8	7	8	8	6	5	5
General services	18	15	18	70	67	62	1	2	2	61	61	60	32	32	28	1	1	1	2	2	2
Electronic support services	5	5	6	14	14	16	2	2	2	20	21	22	7	7	8	20	19	19	11	11	11
Security and safety services	40	44	44	25	27	27	0	0	0	14	14	14	12	13	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	121	129	126	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	49	56
Total non-secretarial	237	241	242	197	198	191	7	8	8	197	195	194	94	96	88	57	55	55	62	88	97
Total General Service categories	343	346	347	296	296	297	81	81	79	310	311	307	162	162	164	228	230	226	166	171	168
Ratio of General Service to Professionals and above	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.5	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Ratio of secretarial General Service to Professionals and above	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3
Ratio of non-secretarial General Service to Professionals	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.1	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4
Technology and innovation resources (thousands of United States dollars)																					
(a) EDP equipment	2 236.8	4 854.0	1 444.2	1 333.0	881.6	717.9	101.0	106.0	91.0	2 457.3	1 843.2	1 677.4	831.5	754.6	547.7	1 556.9	1 985.0	1 581.1	886.9	981.3	730.4
(b) Information and communications equipment	111.3	251.4	189.5	30.6	80.2	63.0	15.0	6.0	1.0	205.2	223.8	185.1	52.6	161.0	158.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	140.5	155.7	183.2
Total equipment	2 348.1	5 105.4	1 633.7	1 363.6	961.8	780.9	116.0	112.0	92.0	2 662.5	2 067.0	1 862.5	884.1	915.6	705.7	1 556.9	1 985.0	1 581.1	1 027.4	1 137.0	913.6
Equipment resources per 1 post (thousands of United States dollars)	4.2	9.1	2.9	2.9	2.1	1.7	0.6	0.6	0.5	5.4	4.2	3.8	3.3	3.4	2.6	3.0	3.8	3.0	2.6	2.8	2.3

Annex III

Analysis of the number of General Service staff relative to Professional staff and technology and innovation resources (extrabudgetary)

	ECA			ESCAP			ECE			ECLAC			ESCWA			Department of Economic and Social Affairs			UNCTAD		
Occupational group	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03	98-99	00-01	02-03
Professional and above	**26**	**29**	**23**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**7**	**3**	**3**	**38**	**20**	**18**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**24**	**23**	**19**	**13**	**9**	**9**
General Service categories																					
Secretarial support	**26**	**34**	**15**	**30**	**29**	**29**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**8**	**9**	**6**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**10**	**9**	**1**	**6**	**4**	**1**
Non-secretarial																					
Conference services	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Personnel services	5	5	5	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	7	8	8	3	3	3
Financial services	6	6	6	4	4	4	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	6	7	2	3	3
General services	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6	6
Electronic support services	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Security and safety services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	44	47	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	5
Total non-secretarial	**55**	**58**	**46**	**12**	**10**	**10**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**11**	**9**	**10**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**13**	**15**	**17**
Total General Service categories	**81**	**92**	**61**	**42**	**39**	**39**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**19**	**18**	**16**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**23**	**23**	**16**	**19**	**19**	**18**
Ratio of General Service to Professionals and above	3.1	3.2	2.7	21.0	19.5	19.5	0.3	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.8	1.5	2.1	2.0
Ratio of secretarial General Service to Professionals and above	1.0	1.2	0.7	15.0	14.5	14.5	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.4	0.1
Ratio of non-secretarial General Service to Professionals	2.1	2.0	2.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.7	1.9
Technology and innovation resources (thousands of United States dollars)																					
(a) EDP equipment	0.0	0.0	0.0	47.3	10.7	38.1	18.0	13.0	24.0	151.8	234.7	204.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.7	50.0	52.0	2 039.6	1 536.0	1 528.6
(b) Information and communications equipment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	36.5	38.5	28.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	679.9	512.2	509.5
Total equipment	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**47.3**	**10.7**	**38.1**	**18.0**	**13.0**	**24.0**	**188.3**	**273.2**	**233.3**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**23.7**	**50.0**	**52.0**	**2 719.5**	**2 048.2**	**2 038.1**
Equipment resources per 1 post (thousands of United States dollars)	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.3	0.9	2.0	2.6	4.8	3.3	7.2	6.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	1.1	1.5	85.0	73.2	75.5